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Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report on the International Comparison Programme prepared by the Global Office of the International Comparison Programme at the World Bank. The Commission is requested to review progress and provide direction on the continuation of the Programme.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I, sect. B, para. 2.

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Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme

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I. Introduction

1. The International Comparison Programme (ICP) is a global statistical initiative involving national, regional and international agencies coordinated by the World Bank. The governance structure consists of an Executive Board composed of senior members of selected multilateral, regional and national organizations, all of which are deeply engaged in the management of the programme. The Global Office, housed at the World Bank, acts as the secretariat to the Board and is in charge of the conceptual and data integrity of ICP, interregional coordination and publication of the global results.

2. The Latin American region, consisting of nine Spanish-speaking countries and one Portuguese-speaking country of South America, was the first to publish results for household consumption components of the gross domestic product (GDP). The combination of a small number of homogeneous countries, their previous ICP experience, and the coordination and support from an experienced national statistical office allowed the region to publish results six months after the end of the reference period. A second report was published in October 2006, providing purchasing power parities (PPPs) and price level indices at the basic heading level.

3. Most of the other regions have completed data collection, and are planning their first publications for the first half of 2007. Price data collection for the ICP ring comparison programme, which will calibrate the regional PPPs to a global currency, has been completed for all consumption items except health, education and housing.

4. As a result of this progress, two publication dates have been established for the global results:

- September 2007, for household consumption, including the health and education components of government expenditures
- December 2007, for full GDP.

5. This paper provides an update on the status of the Programme since the previous report to the Statistical Commission (see E/CN.3/2006/8), includes background on how participation in the Programme contributes to statistical capacity-building, and concludes with a brief evaluation of lessons learned as they apply to the sustainability of the programme on an ongoing basis.

6. The Commission may wish to comment on the progress to date and the direction the Programme should take to ensure its longer term sustainability.

II. Overview of the global programme

A. Data collection

7. Most national statistical offices completed a major data collection effort, having obtained prices on a monthly and quarterly basis for at least part of the 2005 reference year for items in the consumption basket, not counting health, education and housing. There were 144 countries, including the Statistical Office of the European Communities/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Eurostat/OECD) member countries, participating at the same time one year ago; all

but three have provided data on a timetable to allow their inclusion in the global results.

8. Data quality problems for the health and education sectors, especially in obtaining comparable estimates for the public sector components, have created delays in the preparation of total consumption results. The lack of comparability of methods used to estimate owner-occupied housing also created quality problems.

9. Because of the expertise required to collect and validate the equipment and construction data, the regions relied on expert consultants. The Global Office also provided international consultants to review the data to ensure comparability across regions.

B. Data validation

10. The current round of the International Comparison Programme is more ambitious than previous rounds in terms of the number of products priced, the number of countries, the introduction of new methodology and the attention to the overall statistical operations.

11. The Global Office is supporting the final data review by providing the computations of the basic heading PPPs and aggregates of GDP for each region. This support will continue through the publication stage, with guidance to be provided on the level of detail to be published. Data quality varies across countries resulting from different levels of resources and statistical capacity. The goal is to include as many countries as possible; therefore, the calculation of PPPs will be in stages with those not meeting quality standards of other countries to be added after the other computations are finalized. Metadata will be provided to advise data users.

C. Preparation of expenditure weights and national accounts review

12. All regions have obtained the required breakdown of the national GDPs into the 155 basic headings based on the most recent available data. For many countries, this is for the 2004 GDP or an earlier year. The weights to aggregate the basic heading PPPs to higher levels will reflect the most recent expenditure weights structure applied to the 2005 GDP.

13. The Global Office prepared a weights diagnostic module to evaluate the data by basic headings across countries within each region, and to identify inconsistencies in either the breakdown or the level of the national accounts. It has also started to collect detailed metadata on the estimation procedures for individual national accounts to understand major departures from intercountry comparability.

D. International Comparison Programme Handbook and Operational Manual

14. The ICP Handbook and the Operational Manual document the underlying methodology and procedures for the current round of the Programme. They provide guidance on setting up the survey framework and data collection. Chapters are devoted to data editing and pricing government services, housing, and equipment

and construction. Separate guidelines are also provided for health and housing data collection. Other chapters document the methodology for estimation and aggregation of PPPs for the regional and ring comparisons. Some regions have provided translated versions to their countries.

E. Software

15. The ICP tool pack software has matured into a suite of tools that support activities such as preparing product lists and specifications using the structured product description (SPD) approach, data-collection forms, and diagnostic tables supporting data validation. Experience obtained in harmonizing and preparing the ring product list is now being used to support preparation of future regional product lists.

16. The ICP tool pack was converted from a web-based to a Windows platform to simplify and enable its use in regions and countries that had stringent security restrictions for using web-based systems.

17. New data entry modules were developed specific to equipment, construction and government compensation items. Aligned with those data entry modules were new software modules to assist expert consultants in reviewing and validating price data collected on those items. A new diagnostic module was developed for the regions to validate expenditure weights data provided by countries.

F. International Comparison Programme newsletters and website

18. The quarterly newsletter continues to expand in scope and coverage to include articles on methods and uses of PPPs, in addition to providing updates on the progress of the current round. The ICP website was used to publish the Latin American results and will also be the vehicle for the results from the other regions and the global report. The website contains complete coverage of governance issues discussed at the Executive Board meetings and regional coordinator workshops. It also contains the most up-to-date versions of the ICP Handbook and the Operational Manual. The website is undergoing a review in preparation for the publication of the regional and global reports.

G. Linking the regions

19. While the bottom-up process of developing unique regional product specifications will improve the regional PPPs, they need to be calibrated to a global currency to allow comparisons across regions. The previous process, which relied on a single country pricing products from other regional lists to "bridge" the PPPs, produced results influenced by the pricing structure of the bridge country.

20. New methodology, called the ring comparison, has been implemented to overcome the perceived weakness of the previous approach. One of the major outcomes is the global ring product list, which was prepared by creating a composite of the regional lists. The end product is an international set of product specifications that overlap the different regions based on harmonized terms and definitions. This global ring product list can be a starting point for future international comparisons.

21. The introduction of the ring comparison concept required the development of new methodology to use the PPPs from the ring comparison to calibrate the regional data to a global currency. The resulting methodology is documented in chapters 14 and 15 of the ICP Handbook.

22. The annex to the present report shows the countries included in the ring comparison. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region will not be included. Instead, Russia has priced the OECD list of specifications, which will allow it to be included in that comparison. This means that the first stage of the global linking will include Africa, Asia, Western Asia, Latin America and Eurostat/OECD. Once those results are finalized, Russia and the rest of the CIS member countries will enter the comparison using Russia as a traditional bridge between OECD and CIS.

H. Publications

23. The summary and detailed findings for Latin America — aggregates and PPPs — can be found on the World Bank ICP website. Significant findings were that per capita measures differ significantly from those based on extrapolations from the previous ICP round. It showed that the gap between the relatively richest and poorest countries was considerably narrowed, and the ranking by per capita expenditures was substantially changed.

24. The other regions are following their own timetable to publish results. Two publication dates, September and December 2007, have been established for the global results. Effective consumption for 2005, including the health and education components of government expenditures, will be published in September 2007. The most recent official estimates of the 2005 GDP and basic components will be used. A final report showing full GDP will be published in December 2007. There may be countries added that could not be included in the September 2007 report. The Global Office, in consultation with the ICP regions and Eurostat/OECD, will determine the level of detail to be published in the global report. Regional coordinators may wish to publish more detail at a later time.

I. Financial and technical resources

25. Considerable effort is under way to obtain additional resources to bring the 2005 Programme to closure. While the World Bank has assumed the largest share of funding for the global programme (over US$ 8 million), the programme benefited from significant financial contributions from the aid organizations in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Development Programme. The African and Asian Development Banks provided significant resources for their regional programmes, as did the Arab Fund for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Eurostat and OECD provided significant in kind support with technical assistance and support for the data collection carried out by their member countries participating in the ring comparison. National statistical offices in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Russia also provided significant technical support to regional programmes. The contributions of the

national statistical offices were significant, as their price data collection efforts far exceeded any compensation they received.

III. Approved policies

26. The following policies can be found on the ICP website:

- **Policies for the global data review**. Access and data sharing between each region and the Global Office are determined by bilateral arrangements with each region. This policy paper spells out the between-region data sharing and confidentiality requirements for the steps leading to the publication of the global results.
- **Procedures for publication of global PPPs and related measures**. Data from the regional and ring comparison programmes required by the Global Office are defined. The steps leading to publication are detailed along with the responsibilities of the regions and the Global Office. Policies regarding fixity of regional results and the numeraire currency are also in place. The role of Eurostat/OECD in this stage is included.
- **Access to ICP microdata and unpublished results**. This is an outcome of the efforts of a working group established by the Executive Board and the Global Office to provide policies regarding access by researchers to microdata and unpublished results after the regional and global results have been published. Policies regarding researcher access and the confidentiality restrictions are defined.

IV. Overview of the International Comparison Programme regional programmes and the Eurostat/OECD comparison

27. The ICP regions are working on several fronts, including finalizing consumption data for publication, completing data collection for the remaining GDP components, and participating with the Global Office and ring countries in that data collection and validation.

- **Latin America**: This was the first region for which total consumption data were estimated, analysed and published. Currently, the regional team is putting the finishing touches on the other components of GDP, but is experiencing a number of unsuspected difficulties, most of which are probably universal rather than regional. For example, occupational data on government are difficult to obtain and cannot be easily weighted. Foreign trade data are not as easy a source for capital equipment as expected. The region, with assistance from the Global Office, is completing the final data validation and preparing the data for publication at the GDP level in the first quarter of 2007.
- **Asia-Pacific**: Twenty-two countries are participating in the full GDP comparison, 13 have submitted construction data, and 16 have submitted equipment data. For health and education, there are disparities in price data from the countries, and guidance is being sought from the Global Office. Asia has submitted ring comparison data to the Global Office according to the timetable. Preliminary PPPs for Asia are scheduled to be published in the first

quarter of 2007. The Asia-Pacific region is collaborating with the World Bank on a regional poverty PPP project.

- **Africa**: Forty-eight countries have submitted consumption data, followed by 45 and 32, respectively, providing pharmaceutical and education data. Data submission for dwellings is ongoing. All ring countries have provided consumption data. Forty-six countries are reviewing GDP data to generate weights. The region faces the largest degree of complexity from the number of countries taking part and the fact that they have sharp differences in climate, cultures, and statistical capacity. Technical support is being provided by the national statistics offices of France and the United Kingdom, and the Global Office is assisting with the estimation processes. The region is hopeful that consumption data will be released in the first quarter of 2007, unless there are unforeseen circumstances.

- **Western Asia**: All participating countries in the Western Asia region have completed price surveys for household consumption. Health and education price surveys were conducted in 2006. Preliminary PPPs and per capita measures were calculated and examined. Countries are collecting prices for construction, equipment and compensation of employees in the government sector. Out of the 11 countries 10 have submitted 2004 GDP expenditure weights, which are undergoing the third round of validation. A regional meeting is scheduled for January 2007 to review the preliminary per capita results with the countries to reveal any potential problems in the data. The final consumption result should be ready for publication in the first quarter of 2007, after it is presented to heads of national statistical offices. The intention is to publish full GDP in the second quarter of 2007.

- **CIS**: Ten countries are participating in the comparison of GDP. Uzbekistan did not officially confirm its decision to participate; Turkmenistan did confirm its participation, but has not so far submitted any data and may withdraw from the comparison. Final results are expected to be obtained not later than September 2007; they will be submitted for approval to the Council of Heads of Statistical Services of the CIS countries, who will decide on the publication dates of the results.

- **Eurostat and OECD**: Eurostat and OECD conduct separate comparison programmes for their member countries. Eurostat/OECD is fully participating in the ring comparison with four member countries collecting prices that will be used to bring their results together with the ICP regions. Eurostat/OECD will be providing assistance with the global data review and the steps to include the CIS region in the final results.

V. Steps to improve data quality and build statistical capacity

28. The document entitled "Evaluation of the International Comparison Programme" (E/CN.3/1999/8), considered by the thirtieth session of the Statistical Commission, spelled out the deficiencies of previous rounds and the actions needed to ensure the continuation of the programme. As a result, many aspects of the programme have been re-engineered through the use of new methods and procedures to address the weaknesses detected by the evaluation.

29. The International Comparison Programme provides a unique opportunity to improve and harmonize statistical methodology around the world. The Programme shares a common technical language and conceptual framework related to national-level statistical programmes supporting the consumer price index (CPI) and output of national accounts. The very essence of the Programme is based on the comparability of results between countries, strict adherence to time schedules, and a common understanding of data sharing and confidentiality requirements. There is no other statistical programme requiring so much cooperation between national, regional and international organizations.

30. The fundamental concept underlying the estimation of PPPs is that the prices of products to be compared are based on the principles of representativity and comparability. The products selected should be simultaneously representative of what each country's consumers purchase and also have characteristics comparable across countries.

31. For these reasons, the procedure to determine the product specifications was re-engineered by developing the structured product description (SPD) procedure, allowing each region to develop its own specifications, and fully engaging countries in the process.

32. The detailed coding structure of the Eurostat/OECD classification of expenditures on GDP was integrated with the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP), which is an international standard adopted for use in national accounts for the compilation and analysis of consumption expenditures.

33. The long-term benefit is that the coding structure will allow a connection between products across ICP rounds. Countries can use it to harmonize the ICP list with their CPI products, thus integrating these activities. Many countries are planning to use the SPD approach to improve their CPI product specifications.

34. A new approach to compare the construction component of GDP was developed and implemented. The new procedure requires pricing a smaller list of construction components rather than a complete set of building inputs.

35. The concepts in the SPD process were used to define specifications for equipment to be priced to improve the equipment comparison. Data-collection forms were developed that allow countries to price either the targeted product or an alternate. If neither product was available, the form allowed the country to price something comparable and then to complete a coding structure defining the product.

36. While previous paragraphs provided specific examples where capacity-building took place, it also occurs indirectly. The need for countries to agree on a product list brings national-level price statisticians together to agree about how the products should be defined; this can lead to application of the same concepts to their CPIs. Training provided on sampling and survey methods, data validation, and estimation of average prices and PPPs adds to country-level knowledge to improve their price statistics.

37. When countries have to subject their GDP numbers to an international comparison, problems are exposed requiring them to take some action. Problems related to the difficult-to-compare components of GDP such as housing, government and capital formation are shared across countries, with them jointly sharing

knowledge and experience. The ICP Handbook went through several revisions as methodology and procedures evolved to improve the data quality. The final additions to the ICP tool pack suite of software to support data collection also contributed to data quality improvements.

VI. Lessons learned and the future of the International Comparison Programme

38. National statistical offices and regional coordinating organizations continue to ask questions about the future of the International Comparison Programme because of concerns that the experience and expertise gained from the investment in human capital and methodology will be lost in the absence of plans to continue the Programme. The previous section outlined some steps taken to resolve the data quality shortcomings of previous rounds. An evaluation of the current round will be in order to determine how well that goal was accomplished. The purpose of this section is to highlight a few lessons learned to date, so that the stage may be set for a strategic evaluation and planning for the future.

39. The first lesson learned stems from the fact that no country can produce a PPP by itself. This requires an all-around recognition that intercountry coordination is necessary. It is also essential to abide by standards accepted by other countries, share data collection and national accounting procedures, and allow data to be subjected to review by others. While there were letters of agreement between regions and countries, and also between regions and the Global Office, these agreements fell short because of a lack of mutual understanding of the requirements for participation in terms of data quality and timeliness, data-sharing responsibilities and adherence to prescribed procedures.

40. Even though the publication of the Latin American results made headlines in the regional financial press, little user support was mobilized and readied for vigorous support for a second round, as most energy went into preparing the regional estimates on time. The lesson learned is the need to interact with users, elicit their support and educate them about both the use of the data and the shortcomings, if the Programme is to become an ongoing programme.

41. The next lesson is related to the capacity of the participants. It is a rare national statistical office that does not have a full slate of official statistics to produce. It is a serious stretch for many to take on an additional data-collection effort to collect prices for several hundred items outside their CPI basket. The fact that we have come this far is a tribute to them. The lesson learned is that they cannot do everything at once, which is why consumption data were obtained in 2005 and collection for the remainder of the GDP components continued through most of 2006. The availability or lack thereof of indices to back cast the 2006 data will affect the final quality of the data.

42. The knowledge and expertise required to organize and coordinate a complex statistical programme is available in the national statistical offices of developed countries, more so than in the regional and international organizations. Support was provided by Statistics Canada in Latin America, Australia in Asia, Russia in the CIS region, and both the United Kingdom and France in Africa. The important lesson is

that similar partnering arrangements should be sought from the very beginning for future rounds.

43. More recognition needs to be given to the fact that the same language is not spoken in every country. Failure to allow sufficient time and resources for translation caused delays and data quality problems.

44. While the primary work programme for the International Comparison Programme involves the collection of prices, the final result is the use of PPPs to deflate national GDPs into a common currency so that per capita and structural comparisons can be made. While most efforts in the current round have been towards improving the price statistics, future rounds should give more emphasis to the underlying quality of countries' national accounts.

45. The ICP tool pack has evolved over the past few years as a result of better understanding of the ICP process and the needs and constraints of countries and regions. It has moved from a purely web-based system to its current stage on a Windows platform. It has been used at the country level in two regions. Other regions either had their own well-established software or had difficulty in implementing the tool pack. A valuable lesson learned is that such systems are invaluable for introducing data management and consistent methodology, but they must be easy to use and maintain.

46. The above sections highlighted the many methodological changes implemented to overcome previous problems. Their success is still an open question, subject to a review of the resulting data. It is difficult to develop and implement at the same time, which can result in false starts or repeated efforts. An important lesson is the need to control and manage any future enhancements before a proper evaluation.

47. The list of lessons learned would not be complete without a comment about resources. A commitment was made to cover the full GDP when there were inadequate resources to do so. Problems surfaced and the timetable leading to the Programme's completion is suffering as a result.

48. Overall, a major legacy of the 2005 round is the infrastructure that is now in place for the smooth continuation of future rounds. This starts with the capacity of the national and regional organizations and encompasses all the developments documented above. But it is a legacy at risk if there are no strong guarantees of continuity. For example, units dedicated to the International Comparison Programme in Latin America are being dismantled.

49. The scope of the next round needs to be determined, with attention being given to the above lessons on what can be done at one time. If there is to be a concentration on consumption, the SPD capabilities in place would allow regions and countries to update their product specifications and commence data collection in less than a year's time once the decision is made. Resources should be in place and no work attempted beyond what the resources allow.

50. Possible next steps include:

- A further evaluation of lessons learned and an assessment of the data quality, possibly by representatives of participating countries

- Evaluation of the consumption lists with an eye to reducing the scope and coverage of future data collections if quality can be maintained
- Evaluation of the ring comparison programme and product specifications to integrate that collection with the regional collections
- A workplan that puts the data collection on a continual basis with a subset of basic headings priced each year that avoids the significant start-up costs involved with a periodic programme
- Harmonization of CPI specifications in groups of countries, so that data collections can be more easily integrated with the International Comparison Programme
- Evaluation of the tool pack in some national statistical offices, and updating the system in line with forthcoming recommendations so that it can be used for the CPI as well as the International Comparison Programme
- Assisting countries to obtain resources for the International Comparison Programme as part of their operational programmes.

VII. Conclusion

51. **The International Comparison Programme faces unique challenges in providing statistical methods that can be carried out in practice by countries that differ in size, culture, and diversity in goods and services available to their population. This, plus the fact that statistical capabilities vary widely across countries, makes the Programme one of the most complex international statistical activities ever attempted.**

52. **The considerable progress since the previous report to the Commission is reflected by the publication of results in one region, with the other regions soon to follow. A considerable effort went into implementing new and improved methodology to improve data quality; that also contributed to statistical capacity and the sustainability of the Programme.**

53. **When the 2008 session of the Commission begins, the results of the 2005 round will have been published. That will reflect the culmination of a multi-year effort resulting in new methods being developed and documented, plus a substantial investment in human capital from the national to the global levels. Without a plan to move forward, the resources will begin to slip away, which will greatly increase the start-up costs if the effort has to begin anew at a later time.**

54. **The Commission is invited to consider the actions essential to move the Programme to a sustainable basis, and to deliberate on the prospective steps ahead. It is suggested that the Commission consider a first evaluation by representatives of a selection of participating countries to evaluate the usefulness of the data, review issues encountered in meeting the timetables, and recommend whether a complete evaluation of the governance and technical programme should take place. The representatives should also prepare initial recommendations about the requirements for country participation, the coverage of the full GDP versus consumption, and the timing of the next round.**

VIII. Points for discussion

55. **The Commission is requested to review and comment on progress to date. More specifically, the Commission is requested to provide direction for a timely first evaluation of the International Comparison Programme to determine its future scope and sustainability.**

Annex

List of ring countries

Africa	*Asia*	*Latin America*	*Western Asia*	*Eurostat and OECD*
Cameroon	Hong Kong, China	Brazil	Jordan	Estonia
Egypt	Malaysia	Chile	Oman	Japan
Kenya	Philippines			Slovenia
Senegal	Sri Lanka			United Kingdom
South Africa				
Zambia				

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Migration statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session.[a] It summarizes the activities of the United Nations Statistics Division on international migration statistics and reports on the outcome of the expert group meeting on international migration statistics held from 4 to 7 December 2006 in New York. The Commission is requested to take note of the report, which is submitted for information.

[a] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I.B.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The Statistical Commission, at its thirty-seventh session, identified migration statistics as an agenda item for its thirty-eighth session. The present report concerns the work carried out by the United Nations Secretariat and its plans for 2007 and 2008 in the area of international migration statistics.

II. Data collection and dissemination

2. The United Nations Statistics Division collects statistics on international migration from more than 200 countries. The collection consists of two questionnaires: the Population census questionnaire, used for collecting data on migrant stock, is administered when a country is known to have conducted a census; and the Questionnaire on international migration and travel statistics, is sent out every year to collect data on migration flows.

3. The collection of data on international migration flows has two parts. The first part is data collection from the 56 countries that are members of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), through an intersecretariat arrangement with Eurostat, which sends out a joint questionnaire to those countries. The data are shared with participating institutions, namely the Statistics Division, Eurostat, the Council of Europe, ECE and the International Labour Office (ILO). The second part is collection from the remaining countries of the world through the Questionnaire on international migration and travel statistics.

4. Based on the results of the data collected from the Population census questionnaire, six tables pertaining to the migrant population have been made available on the Statistics Division website (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybcens.htm). They include population by country of birth, population by country of citizenship and economically active foreign-born population by occupation. Most of the tables are tabulated by sex and age, for all countries for which data are available, from the 1990 and 2000 census rounds.

III. Meeting of the expert group on measuring international migration on the theme of concepts and methods

5. The Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of the Statistics Division convened a meeting of the expert group on measuring international migration with the theme of concepts and methods in New York from 4 to 7 December 2006. The meeting was organized in response to the need to improve statistics on international migration and to broaden the implementation of the United Nations recommendations, as contained in the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*.[1]

6. The main objectives of the meeting were to (a) assess requirements for international migration statistics in response to policy interest and the challenges faced by national statistical systems in measuring international migration flows and stock; (b) review national practices in the compilation of migration statistics and identify difficulties associated with the recommended concepts and definitions;

[1] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 58, Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.5).

(c) explore ways to foster cooperation between the policy machineries of Governments and their data-collection agencies; and (d) on the basis of those assessments, determine the scope and content of a handbook on statistics on international migration to be prepared by the Statistical Division.

7. The meeting brought together experts on international migration and representatives of national statistical offices and immigration offices and of regional and international organizations. Participants included experts from 10 countries, four regional commissions, Eurostat, ILO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank.

8. The meeting identified the following priority actions aimed at improving statistics on international migration:

(a) Provision of guidance and technical support on the use of censuses and sample surveys to measure aspects of international migration;

(b) Development of a handbook focusing on core topics, with case studies to clarify how various sources are used and/or combined by some countries;

(c) Training to develop national capacity to produce international migration statistics;

(d) Promotion of data-sharing and the use of other-country data for the estimation of emigration, drawing on experiences from the regional exchange of data;

(e) Creation of a technical group consisting of national statistical offices, immigration authorities, agencies of the United Nations system and other international organizations to support that work.

9. A copy of the recommendations of the meeting is attached for information in the annex.

IV. Workplan for 2007-2008

10. For 2007, the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch will disseminate on the Statistics Division website an interactive database on questions related to migration in the 2000 round of national population censuses.

11. For 2007, a technical report on measuring international migration through population censuses will be prepared to guide countries in their implementation of the 2010 round of population censuses. An expert group meeting is planned for 2007 to review the draft technical report.

12. A handbook on international migration statistics is scheduled for submission in 2008. That handbook will provide practical guidance on migrant flows and stock that can be captured using different sources of data, focusing on a core set of variables to measure international migration and providing examples of how countries have successfully used specific data sources or a combination of sources to measure migration.

13. An expert group meeting is planned for 2008 to review the draft handbook on international migration statistics.

Annex

Recommendations of the meeting of the expert group on measuring international migration with the theme of concepts and methods

1. As indicated during the High-level Dialogue on International Migration, which was convened by the General Assembly on 14 and 15 September 2006, demand for policy-relevant statistics on international migration is increasing. However, because the sources of these data are not sufficiently developed, national Governments and international bodies are unable to provide the comprehensive assessment needed. Meanwhile, the *Recommendations for International Migration Statistics, Revision 1*,[a] are not being widely applied. The meeting considered that a concerted effort was needed to improve international migration statistics and identified the following priority actions:

(a) Provision of guidance and technical support on the use of censuses and sample surveys to measure aspects of international migration;

(b) Development of a handbook focusing on core variables and using case studies to clarify how various sources can be used and/or combined to measure international migration;

(c) Training to develop national capacity to produce international migration statistics;

(d) Promotion of data-sharing and the use of other-country immigration data for the estimation of emigration, drawing on experiences from the regional exchange of data;

(e) Creation of a technical group consisting of national statistical offices, immigration authorities, agencies of the United Nations system and other international organizations to support that work.

A. Enhancement of the 1998 recommendations

2. To improve implementation of the *1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, the definition of international migrant and related concepts should be made more operational. Practical guidance should be provided on how to measure migrant flows and migrant stocks using different sources of data. It is recommended that the Statistics Division produce a handbook on methodology that will:

(a) Identify core variables;

(b) Clarify the philosophy and concepts used and review definitions where necessary;

(c) Provide examples from countries;

(d) Provide guidelines on required tabulations.

[a] Statistical Papers, No. 58, Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14).

B. Sources of data

3. Statistics on international migration come from different sources including registers and other administrative sources, censuses and sample surveys. It is often necessary to combine data from different sources to produce them.

Administrative sources

4. To enhance the availability of administrative data in measuring international migrant stock and international migration flows, several actions are required at the national and international levels.

5. National statistical offices should:

(a) Establish and/or maintain a dialogue and work closely with the producers of administrative data, including departments of home (internal) affairs, ministries of the interior, immigration services;

(b) To the extent possible, urge the suppliers of administrative data to publish and disseminate relevant data, including metadata;

(c) Be familiar with the rules and regulations governing the control and management of international migration and their enforcement.

6. To facilitate communication the Statistics Division and the regional commissions should support collaborative meetings at the regional level between suppliers of administrative data and national statistics offices. Moreover, suppliers of administrative data should be included in future deliberations at the regional and interregional levels.

Population censuses

7. Data collected from the population census are an essential benchmark for the improvement of basic international migration statistics. The 2010 round offers an opportunity to collect more harmonized international migration data, specifically on the migrant stock. To ensure that the 2010 round of censuses will produce the expected outcome, the following actions are recommended:

(a) The United Nations Population Fund and the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the regional commissions and other relevant organizations, should prepare advocacy material for use by countries to promote the use of population censuses to measure migration;

(b) The Statistics Division and the regional commissions should provide technical guidance on how to collect international migration data in the 2010 census round. Such guidance would include methodological materials, training workshops and technical assistance to countries;

(c) Countries should collect data on both country of birth and country of citizenship and present them cross-tabulated with sex and age. Data collection on additional topics to identify foreign background may be considered by countries that require a more comprehensive picture of migration stock;

(d) Population censuses should also attempt to systematically enumerate refugees and asylum-seekers in their total counts.

Sample surveys

8. Countries should explore the possibility of using sample surveys to collect data on international migration, especially for those aspects for which no other sources are available.

C. Data compilation and dissemination

9. The analysis and dissemination of data are effective advocacy tools and should be employed to encourage policymakers to support their collection and use.

10. While there was progress in the availability of administrative data and in including migration-related questions in the census questionnaires, many countries do not publish the collected data or do not publish them in a timely fashion. Countries should be encouraged to tabulate and disseminate key migration data from the census and other sources in a timely fashion. The electronic processing of data allows an acceleration of the process and an increase in the level of detail of the disseminated data.

11. International organizations collecting international migration data should make such data available, together with the relevant metadata, in a comprehensive and timely fashion. For that to be possible, countries should provide such metadata (including specific source, definition, method of collection and criteria used to identify migrant). The United Nations should give clear guidance to countries on the level of detail required for the metadata.

12. The meeting noted the low response rate in the United Nations collection of international migration statistics. Although it was felt that that was primarily due to non-availability of data in accordance with the definition and form required by the United Nations, the Organization should be more proactive in its interactions with countries, providing them with feedback and information on what has been received and seeking clarifications when required.

13. The Statistics Division should also:

(a) Review and simplify its existing data request, in light of policy demands, and design its international migration questionnaires with due regard for existing sources of data and needs for information on both immigration and emigration;

(b) Publish migration data as soon as possible and develop an interactive database on its website to enable external users to extract data on international migration in a user-friendly manner.

D. Data-sharing and exchange

14. There is a lack of information on emigration in many countries. Such information is important for sending countries; therefore, special efforts should be made by countries to develop strategies to collect the information. Data may be collected through censuses, sample surveys or administrative sources.

15. There is a need for comparable statistics to facilitate the sharing of information. In that regard, national statistical offices should make an effort to

ensure that nationally available administrative migration data conform with the United Nations recommendations.

16. The meeting noted the potential value of other countries' immigration data to estimates of emigration, but considered that viable data-sharing and exchange were still remote. It is necessary to document experiences and outcomes of current data exchange initiatives and to build on them.

17. Possibilities for data exchange (like that done on the foreign-born population or foreign nationals in some regions) should be explored. In that regard, relevant requirements for the adoption of protocols and/or memorandums of understanding should be assessed, particularly at the regional level, with the involvement of the regional commissions.

E. Capacity-building

18. The Statistics Division, regional commissions, funds and programmes and other regional organizations, should continue supporting workshops in relevant regions to develop national capacity.

19. The Statistics Division, United Nations regional commissions, funds and programmes and other regional organizations, should consider supporting joint measurement/enumeration projects in countries that share a permeable border.

F. Working mechanism

20. The Statistics Division should set up a technical group consisting of national statistical offices, immigration authorities, United Nations agencies and other international organizations to advance the measurement of international migration. Such a technical group would provide inputs to the preparation of the handbook, study the feasibility of data exchange, facilitate training activities and recommend approaches to estimating certain segments or categories of international migration, using a specific source or a combination of sources.

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Items for information: health statistics

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intesecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the terms of reference of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics.

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

1. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics held its third meeting on 17 November 2006 in Geneva, following the Millennium Development Goals indicators meeting. The meeting was chaired by Jennifer Madans (United States). The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, served as secretariat. A total of 21 representatives of national statistical authorities and nine agencies attended the meeting.

2. Since many of the attendees had not participated in any of the previous meetings, the morning session was devoted to presentations on the history of the Working Group and a review of work ongoing in health statistics internationally. The terms of reference that were developed during the past two meetings were also presented. The afternoon session was devoted to a review of the terms of reference and a discussion of the development of a workplan consistent with the terms of reference.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I, sect. B.

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3. There was a frank and extensive discussion about the purpose of the Working Group during the afternoon session. While a range of opinions were expressed about the objectives of the Working Group and how it might operate, there was general consensus among country representatives that such a group was needed but that it would take some time to develop the coordinating structures and forums required. There were discussions on the need to involve ministries of health but without making the Working Group too large. National statistical authorities will have to take a leading role in developing collaborations with the ministries and the Working Group should support this. The need for a focal point within the country was stressed. There was agreement that the Working Group would not take over the work that is currently being done through other mechanisms but that it would serve as a forum for bringing together a range of activities to facilitate information-sharing and the adoption of best practices to strengthen health statistics infrastructure. It was agreed that a broad definition of health would be used.

4. Members will develop an internal structure consistent with the size of the membership and specific workplan.

5. The length of this discussion limited the amount of time available to develop a workplan. As an alternative, representatives of the United States of America, Norway, Finland, Canada, Mexico, Zambia and South Africa agreed to form a small working group to develop the programme for the next annual meeting which would be circulated to participants for their review. Members would be asked to work on agenda items and develop the necessary documents. This report on the meeting and previous sessions would be presented to the Commission.

6. Most of the countries attending expressed interest in being members although several needed to consult with their organizations before committing to serving on the Working Group. Since attendance at the meeting was tied to attendance at the Millennium Development Goals indicators meeting, to save travel costs, membership should also be offered to other nations to ensure representation from countries in all regions and at all levels of development. If the number of countries wishing to participate is unmanageable, some mechanism will have to be developed to either rotate members or appoint a smaller steering committee to direct the work of the Working Group.

7. The best venue for the annual meeting was discussed. It would be a good idea to hold the meeting in conjunction with one of the regional census meetings. The secretariat was asked to investigate options.

8. The terms of reference were modified to reflect the discussion and were adopted by the Working Group.

9. Jennifer Madans (United States) was elected chair for the coming year. A co-chair will also be identified who will become chair after the next annual meeting.

Terms of reference of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

10. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics is a joint working group of United Nations agencies, Member States, representatives of national statistical authorities and other major and international or supranational agencies. At its 35th session, the Commission called for the establishment of an "intersecretariat working group on health statistics to develop a coordinated and integrated agenda for the production of health statistics and agree on standard definitions, classifications and methodologies in health statistics, taking advantage of existing mechanisms wherever possible, and involving the community of official statistics at all stages".[1] The Working Group is needed to bridge the gap between United Nations agencies and the statistical system as represented by national statistical authorities so that the quality and usefulness of health statistics can be improved. The secretariat for the Working Group is the responsibility of WHO, assisted by the United Nations Statistics Division in its capacity as secretariat of the Commission, and in consultation with United Nations agencies and Member States. These terms of reference set out the functions, composition and process of work, including setting the agenda and reporting of the Working Group, as well as the implementation of conclusions.

Functions

11. The principal function of the Working Group is to improve the collection and dissemination of health statistics by increasing interaction between United Nations agencies, Member States and their national statistical authorities and other international and supranational agencies with an interest in health. This will also involve improving coordination between international agencies, national statistical authorities and ministries of health. It will be used as a platform to share key international developments in the field of health statistics and will produce recommendations for the Commission and all United Nations agencies on the following issues:

(a) The active promotion of harmonization and coordination in the field of health and vital statistics;

(b) The active promotion of standard definitions, best practices, classifications, and methodologies in health statistics, including the identification of a core set of health statistics that needs to be measured;

(c) The galvanization of the development of appropriate country health information systems involving both the health and statistical constituencies.

Composition

12. The members of the Working Group include:

(a) Country representatives of national statistical authorities, with representation from all regions and levels of development;

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Supplement No. 4* (E/2004/24), chap. II, sect. C, para. 4 (e) (ii).

(b) Agency representatives of, inter alia, the European Community, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-First Century, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, statistical offices of the United Nations Regional Commissions, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme, the Health Metrics Network, the World Bank;

(c) Invited experts who serve as resource persons as needed by the current priorities of the Working Group;

(d) The United Nations Statistics Division and WHO.

13. The chairperson of the Working Group will be proposed by the members and will remain in that position for a period of three years, with the possibility of reassignment for one more term. The tasks of the chairperson of the Working Group are to chair the meetings; draft, together with the executive secretary, the agenda and minutes of meetings; and liaise with the WHO secretariat to monitor the progress of work in the respective areas of health statistics. Depending on the size of the Working Group, it may be necessary to appoint a steering committee as well as subgroups which will focus on specific issues of concern.

Process of work

(a) Suggestions for the above-mentioned broad-based topics may be proposed by United Nations agencies, Member States and the members of the Working Group. Such suggestions will be submitted to the WHO secretariat for circulation to the members of the Working Group;

(b) The Working Group will meet at least once a year at a convenient location at a date agreed upon during the preceding meeting. WHO will circulate a draft agenda for the meeting, drawn up in consultation with the Working Group's chairman, at least one month before the meeting;

(c) A workplan for the following year will be developed at the conclusion of each annual meeting;

(d) The functions of the secretariat for the Working Group will be carried out by WHO which will organize the agenda, invitations and the reports of the meetings;

(e) The Working Group may conduct its work other than at its annual meeting by correspondence. WHO will act as the focal point for all such correspondence in accordance with modalities to be agreed upon (e.g. an e-mail forum or a shared discussion forum).

14. The Working Group will report annually to the Commission through the chair and the secretariat. Execution of the Working Group's recommendations is the sole responsibility of national statistical authorities and United Nations agencies responsible for the production and analysis of health statistics.

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Items for information: industrial statistics

Industrial statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session. The report, for information, describes work carried out in the context of the work programme on industrial statistics. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

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I. Recommendations made by the Statistical Commission

1. At its thirty-seventh session, held from 7 to 10 March 2006,[1] the Statistical Commission:

(a) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare a position paper on the recommendations made by the programme reviewer on industrial statistics, describing institutional arrangements, deliverables, timetables and consequences of implementing the recommendations;

(b) Noted that the integration of industrial statistics with other statistics, such as services statistics, needed to be improved in that process, and supported the creation of an integrated economic statistics programme and, as a first step, proposed the preparation of a concept paper for further discussion under item 3 (c) of the agenda.

2. At the same session, the Statistical Commission recommended also the establishment of a Friends of the Chair Group, consisting of Member States and international organizations, to prepare a concept paper on the modalities of the integrated approach to economic statistics, including the feasibility of establishing a mechanism for improving coordination among international organizations and work groups engaged in economic statistics.

II. Actions taken

3. A Friends of the Chair Group for the integrated approach to economic statistics has been created. The final recommendations of this Group may include elements of industrial statistics and institutional arrangements for such data collection among international agencies.

4. Work of the United Nations Statistics Division has progressed on existing components of industrial statistics, as described in the report of the programme reviewer.

A. Revision of the international recommendations for industrial statistics

5. The proposals for revision of the international recommendations for industrial statistics were discussed in the meeting of the expert group on industrial statistics. The United Nations Statistics Division prepared a draft annotated outline of the revised international recommendations based on the recommendations of that meeting and sent it for a peer review to members of the expert group. Suggestions received from members would be taken into account in drafting the revised international recommendations which will have the following provisional chapters:

I. Scope of industrial statistics

II. Statistical and reporting units

III. Data items and their definitions

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24).

IV. Performance indicators

V. Data sources and data compilation methods

VI. Data collection

VII. Dissemination

6. The work on drafting the international recommendations will continue in close collaboration with the members of the expert group and some national statistics offices. Efforts will be made so that the revised recommendations are consistent and harmonized, to the extent possible, with international statistical standards issued by other international organizations and inter-agency task forces (e.g., the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Eurostat, the International Labour Organization and the International Monetary Fund).

7. With a view to soliciting cooperation and promoting transparency in formulating the revised recommendations, the draft international recommendations shall be widely circulated to national statistics offices and international agencies for comments. After revising the draft in the light of the comments received, it will be discussed by the expert group for finalization before it is presented to the Statistical Commission for adoption in 2008.

B. Revision of the manual on index numbers of industrial production

8. The revision of the manual on index numbers of industrial production has further progressed with the drafting of a detailed outline and core chapters of the manual, based on the recommendations of the meeting of the expert group held in December 2005.

9. The United Nations Statistics Division is also preparing a survey on country practices for the collection and calculation of volume indices. The results of this survey will provide background on best practices in the manual.

10. A more detailed draft of the manual will be considered at an upcoming meeting of the expert group.

C. Industrial classifications

11. The core classifications used in industrial statistics, namely the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC), have recently been revised. The new versions provide better tools for describing economic activities in the industrial sector, in particular for manufacturing.

12. As part of the ISIC and CPC implementation process, the application of these classifications in industrial censuses and surveys will be supported.

D. Industrial commodity production statistics

13. The revised list of industrial products was successfully introduced in the last round of data collection on commodity production. The revised list is based on a

selection of products that are more relevant to manufacturing industries today. The product definitions are better aligned with existing product classifications, which should make it easier for countries to link them to nationally used product lists and provide a better tool for users who are interested in linking, for example, production and trade.

14. The response rate to the last questionnaire was higher than in previous years, indicating a better acceptance of the new product list.

15. In the latest round, data were not only collected in physical units, as in the past, but also in terms of monetary value. That should further enhance the usefulness of the data and allow for better integration with other industrial statistics components.

16. After a transition period, the *Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook 2005* will be the first publication to feature the revised product list.

E. Statistics on index numbers of industrial production

17. The data collection programme on index numbers of industrial production, i.e. the collection of volume indices, continues to be one of the key components of industrial statistics of the United Nations Statistics Division. The United Nations Statistics Division has started the conversion of the existing index number series, currently using 1995 as a base year, to using 2000 as the new base year.

18. The United Nations Statistics Division is also engaged in a review to explore enlarging the scope of the data collection on index numbers to service industries.

F. Future work

19. The United Nations Statistics Division will engage in a review and discussions with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to explore how the industrial statistics data currently collected by both agencies can be better integrated to provide a comprehensive data set describing industrial production and providing a better and more streamlined tool for data users.

20. Regional initiatives have emerged that work towards a harmonization of industrial statistics, particularly for manufacturing. In East Asia, a project covering the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea has been started to increase comparability of industrial statistics between participating countries, adhering to international standards and classifications. The project aims at comparability at the 3- and 4-digit level of ISIC (possibly amended by a regional adaptation of the classification), exceeding the comparability target formulated by the Statistical Commission in 2006 during the adoption of ISIC.

21. Experiences of this regional effort will be studied and may serve as guidelines for other regions planning to engage in similar exercises.

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Distributive trade statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session.[1] The report outlines the progress in preparation of the revised international recommendations on distributive trade statistics, including an overview of main conclusions reached during a worldwide consultation on an annotated outline of the recommendations and a summary of the Statistics Division action plan for 2007-2009 in this area of statistics. The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I, sect. B.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

06-65245 (E) 050107

I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-seventh session, the Statistical Commission endorsed broadly the initiative and strategy of the Statistics Division to revise the existing international recommendations on distributive trade statistics. The Commission requested the Division to submit a progress report to its thirty-eighth session for information and revised draft recommendations at its thirty-ninth session for approval.

2. The Commission advised that (a) the revision process should be carried out in close consultation with national statistical offices in order to reflect fully the specific needs and circumstances of various groups of countries in general and the needs of countries with a substantial informal sector in particular; (b) the level of detail requested for international reporting should be commensurate with country needs and capacity to compile; (c) the Division should review existing international databases in that area of statistics to avoid creating an additional reporting burden on countries and duplication of work among international organizations; (d) the Division should develop practical guidance on the compilation of distributive trade statistics, including a description of good practices; and (e) the Division should conduct technical assistance activities in that area as a matter of priority.

3. The activities of the Division during 2006 to implement the Commission's decisions are described below.

II. Follow-up to actions taken by the Commission

A. Worldwide consultation on contents of the revised international recommendations on distributive trade statistics

4. In accordance with the Commission's recommendation, in 2006 the Statistics Division conducted a worldwide consultation on modalities and contents of the revised international recommendations on distributive trade statistics. To initiate the process the Division prepared a draft annotated outline of the recommendations and sent it for a peer review to members of the Expert Group on Distributive Trade Statistics and several countries which have significant experience in the compilation of distributive trade statistics. The amended outline was made available to all countries for comments on 11 October 2006. The responses received as at the end of November (from 40 countries and 3 international organizations) can be summarized as follows. The respondents:

(a) Gave their overwhelming support to the Division for its initiative to revise the current recommendations; welcomed the coordinated manner, transparency and involvement of all interested parties in the revision process; and highly appreciated the inclusion of all issues relevant to this key economic activity in a single document;

(b) Found the draft outline to be comprehensive in terms of structure and content, well organized and an adequate treatment of all aspects of distributive trade statistics; and expected the revised recommendations to be a valuable reference document for statistical agencies and a wide range of users;

(c) Strongly emphasized the need for consistency and harmonization between concepts and definitions of these recommendations and all relevant

international statistical standards and handbooks issued by various inter-agency task forces and by international organizations themselves (inter alia, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, the International Labour Organization and the International Monetary Fund);

(d) Expressed strong support for a close alignment between the structure and content of the two documents the Division is working on now (the guidelines and the international recommendations on industrial statistics);

(e) Welcomed the inclusion in the recommendations of a separate section providing guidance on coverage and measurement of informal sector units engaged in trade activities;

(f) Recommended inclusion of examples, either in the recommendations or in the future technical manuals, that will clarify the concepts and will make them more helpful for compilers;

(g) Unanimously supported the integrated approach to economic statistics as proposed in a chapter dealing with data sources and data collection methods and stressed that the revision of the conceptual framework and compilation methods of distributive trade statistics should be seen as part of building an integrated economic statistics programme;

(h) Made a number of more specific suggestions that will contribute to better formulations of the future recommendations. These include boundary issues, both within the sector and between distributive trade and other activities; the treatment of e-commerce and some issues specific to distributive trade entities; coverage, frequency and timelines of data items; and a list of performance indicators;

(i) Emphasized the need for continuous information about developments in the drafting of the recommendations and the follow-up manuals to assist compilers.

5. The full text of the countries' comments is available on the website of the Division at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Distributive_trade/distributive_trade_draft_documents.htm.

B. Preparation of the revised recommendations for submission to the Commission

6. The Division is working on the consolidation of country comments and their incorporation into the provisional draft of the guidelines. An outline of the provisional draft is available as a conference room paper. The guidelines will contain nine chapters and an annex, as follows:

I. Scope of distributive trade

II. Statistical and reporting units

III. Data items and their definitions

IV. Performance indicators

V. Data sources and data compilation methods

VI. Seasonal adjustments

VII. Indices of distributive trade

VIII. Data quality and metadata on distributive trade statistics

IX. Dissemination

Annex (containing the data items for international reporting with an indication of the recommended periodicity of compilation and reporting)

7. The Division is drafting the recommendations in close cooperation with members of the Expert Group on Distributive Trade Statistics who provide concrete inputs on various topics. The Division plans to prepare the provisional draft of the recommendations by the end of March 2007 and make it available for a country review. The amended provisional draft will be discussed at the second meeting of the Expert Group planned for 16 to 19 July 2007. The Division will invite experts from about 30 countries and interested international organizations to ensure a global representation and in-depth discussion of the provisional draft and other related matters. The main objective of the meeting is to review and endorse the provisional draft of the recommendations. The provisional draft will be amended in accordance with the conclusions of the Expert Group and submitted to the thirty-ninth session of the Commission in March 2008.

C. Actions by the Division to implement other decisions of the Commission

8. The current activities of the Division, and activities planned for 2007-2009, to implement other decisions of the Commission, include:

(a) The publication and promotion of the international recommendations on distributive trade statistics upon adoption by the Commission (2008);

(b) The collection of information in preparation for and publication on the Internet of national practices in the compilation and dissemination of distributive trade statistics (2008);

(c) The preparation of a manual and a handbook of good practices to assist compilers (2009);

(d) The development of training materials for use in technical assistance activities to help build the capabilities of countries to compile and disseminate distributive trade statistics (the first workshop is planned for 2008);

(e) The design and creation of the United Nations database on distributive trade statistics to ensure easy user access to internationally comparable data on wholesale and retail trade activities worldwide (the pilot version of the database is expected to be completed in 2009);

(f) The publication of distributive trade statistics in the United Nations Statistical Yearbook (2009).

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Oslo Group on Energy Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics. The report describes the activities of the Oslo Group in 2006, the main findings of the first meeting, the establishment and working mechanism of its electronic discussion forum, the survey it designed on official energy statistics and the issues related to coordination with other groups. The report also contains information about items for the draft agenda of the second meeting of the Group.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I.B.

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Report of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics

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I. Background

1. The Oslo Group on Energy Statistics was established by the bureau of the Statistical Commission in 2005, after discussions at the Statistical Commission based on the issues discussed in the report of the programme reviewer (Statistics Norway) on energy statistics (E/CN.3/2005/3). The mandate of the Oslo Group is contained in annex I.

II. Activities of the Group in 2006

A. First meeting of the Oslo Group

2. The first meeting of the Oslo Group was held in Oslo in February 2006. The main focus for the first meeting was to establish a forum for countries to discuss methodological issues, to identify user needs, to learn from good practices and to contribute to methodological developments related to energy statistics through harmonization, as a means of improving the energy statistics produced on an international level. The need to strengthen official energy statistics was emphasized at the meeting.

3. The challenges facing the production of high-quality energy statistics were discussed at the meeting. For instance, the importance was underlined of good communication between users and producers of energy statistics, to ensure high quality and relevance. It was also pointed out that market liberalization and confidentiality problems are a major challenge for many countries; the issue of improved methods could be a topic for further discussion for the Oslo Group.

4. Many of the presentations stressed the importance of the harmonization of standards and definitions and of statistics themselves. It was emphasized that a global market needs global standards. Particular emphasis was given to harmonizing the definitions of fossil fuel reserves and to harmonizing and closing the link between energy accounts and national accounts. Also, it was recommended that renewable energy definitions be harmonized and that methods related to new energy sources be further developed and integrated in energy statistics. The Oslo Group must pay particular attention to fuel classifications and definitions, conversion factors and different methods for treating non-energy use and blast furnaces.

5. The Group noted that there is a need for updated and modern energy statistics manuals. It was highlighted that the format of the 1982 manual has to be improved if statisticians are to use it. Some of the problems are a result of unclear or unavailable definitions and standards for compiling the energy balance and uncertainty about data collection methods. Standards, conversion factors and best scientific methods should be more easily available to countries. It is also difficult for international organizations to convert national differences in energy statistics to international comparable energy balances, and they would benefit from more standardized national energy statistics.

B. Electronic discussion forum

6. To secure communication between the meetings of the Oslo Group, a discussion forum has been set up on the Group's website at Statistics Norway (available at http://www.ssb.no/ocg). The forum is divided into six different areas or discussion groups. The first area is established as a channel for the secretariat to spread general information about the work of the Group to its members and is not meant for discussion. The other five areas are established as groups whose aim is to enable free discussion between the members of the Group on the following topics:

(a) Crude oil, natural gas and natural gas liquids;

(b) Coal and coke;

(c) Biomass and waste;

(d) New and alternative energy sources and technology;

(e) Principles and methods in energy balances.

7. The forum was launched in August 2006 with contributions from the secretariat. The forum is open for all to read, but only registered members of the Oslo Group can make written contributions. As at 30 November there was some activity in the groups concerned with coal and coke, new and alternative energy sources and technology, and principles and methods in energy balances. Statistics Norway is working to make the forum more easily accessible and will give a practical presentation of the forum at the meeting to be held in India in February 2007.

C. Questionnaire on official energy statistics

8. Under the mandate of the Oslo Group, one of its aims is to define the scope of official energy statistics. To fulfil that part of the mandate, it is necessary to get an overview of the status of energy statistics around the world as regards United Nations principles for official statistics. To obtain the necessary information, the United Nations Statistics Division and Statistics Norway, as the secretariat of the Oslo Group, agreed to send a questionnaire to the States Members of the United Nations. Statistics Norway drafted a questionnaire that has been submitted to the Division. The Division will be in charge of distribution and collection of the questionnaire.

9. The analysis will be performed by the secretariat of the Oslo Group, and its findings will be presented to the Group for discussion at its meetings and on the discussion forum. The results will be important for the fulfilment of the Oslo Group's mandate.

III. Coordination with other groups

10. There are many groups working on issues related to energy statistics, such as the Inter-secretariat Working Group, the London Group, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Eurostat working group on sustainable development and the group working

on the revision of the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) manual. It is important to have good coordination between all these groups and for good coordination the mandates of the groups must be clear.

11. The Oslo Group has been presented to several of these groups at their meetings, including at the meeting of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (CEEEA) and the London Group in New York, in June 2006, and at the meeting of the ECE/OECD/Eurostat working group on sustainable development held in Oslo in November 2006.

12. At the CEEEA meeting, the Oslo Group also presented a document entitled "Coordination of official statistics". The document, which is available through the Oslo Group's discussion forum, explains how the coordination of energy statistics fits into the strategies and working methods of National Statistical Offices. It is important that energy data are collected only once and used for different purposes, including the production of primary energy, national accounts, energy accounts, emission statistics and accounts. A system for official energy statistics must be designed with a broad scope to build a complete system of statistics on both energy production and use. That means that a system should be identified for supply and use, in both energy terms (natural unit of measurement and energy content) and value terms, providing all the data to meet the needs of important users. It is not possible to have tailor-made statistics for all purposes. The challenge is to combine users' needs and to optimize a multi-purpose system of energy statistics.

13. The Oslo Group was invited to contribute to the revision of the SEEA manual in a letter from CEEEA dated 5 September 2006, especially as regards the element of energy accounts. That invitation will be discussed at the meeting of the Oslo Group in New Delhi. However, the secretariat of the Group believes that it will be able to provide documentation that can be part of a revised SEEA manual.

IV. Second meeting of the Oslo Group

14. The second meeting of the Oslo Group will be held in New Delhi from 5 to 7 February 2007, and it will be hosted by the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The second meeting of the Oslo Group will focus on the operational aspects of cooperation. Items for discussion include: what needs to be done to present a revised manual by 2010; how the new manual will be formed; what elements are missing in the existing manual and how they can be included; what elements in the manual need revision; and how and to what extent the elements of official statistics can be incorporated in the new manual, particularly best practices. There will also be a focus on how to develop links and bridges between energy balances and energy accounts and other statistical systems, such as national accounts and emissions statistics.

Annex I

Mandate of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics

The objective of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics is to address issues related to energy statistics and to contribute to improved international standards and improved methods for official energy statistics by pooling expertise in the energy community. The Group will undertake the following actions: (a) identify users' needs; (b) define the scope of official energy statistics; (c) identify and collect national and international best practices; (d) review and contribute to the updating of United Nations Statistics Division handbooks and manuals on energy statistics; (e) identify gaps in coverage (e.g. fuel types, flows) and develop a methodology to cover gaps; (f) adopt links or develop bridges to international standard concepts and classifications in environmental and economic statistics to facilitate the integration and interface of energy statistics with other statistical systems; and (g) recommend a core set of tables as a minimum requirement at the national and international levels to satisfy major user needs.

Annex II

Members of the Oslo Group

At the first meeting of the Oslo Group, held in Oslo in February 2006, 19 countries and five international organizations attended and expressed their interest in participating in the work of the Group.

Countries

Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

Organizations

International Atomic Energy Agency, International Energy Agency, Eurostat, International Monetary Fund (statistical departments) and the United Nations Statistics Division.

After the meeting, other countries showed interest in participating in the work of the Oslo Group. After the meeting in India it is anticipated that a clearer picture will form of who are members and contributors to the work of the Oslo Group and to the revision of the United Nations manuals on energy statistics.

Points of contact

Chair of the Oslo Group

Mr. Olav Ljones
Deputy Director General
Statistics Norway
P.O. Box 8131 Dep
N-0033 Oslo
Norway

Leader of the secretariat

Mr. Atle Tostensen
Adviser
Statistics Norway
P.O. Box 8131 Dep
N-0033 Oslo
Norway

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Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics. The report describes the activities of the Working Group in 2005-2007, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report of the Working Group.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I.B.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics

I. Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics in 2005

1. The first meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics was convened by the International Energy Agency (IEA) on 22 and 23 November 2005 to discuss the status of cooperation between organizations on energy statistics and to explore ways and means to improve it.

2. The meeting was attended by 25 regional and international organizations. It gave the opportunity to all participants to share their experience in the area of energy statistics, to highlight similarities and differences, and to discuss individual or collective solutions to improve the overall situation, taking into account the need to reduce the burden passed to common member countries and economies as well as to the organizations themselves. A communiqué was released after the meeting (see annex I).

II. Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics in 2006

3. Until June 2006, IEA undertook to start collecting the information required for further work between organizations by contacting all the organizations that attended the first meeting of the Working Group. It requested from meeting participants a list of information related to their work on energy statistics (see annex II). As of 19 December 2006, IEA has received information from two thirds of the organizations and is still awaiting information from the remaining third.

4. There has been a delay in the process of the information received and the preparation of a website. One of the difficulties is the need to make the site as useful and user-friendly as possible. For instance, a user would have the possibility to see on one page all the definitions used by all the organizations for one particular flow/transaction or one particular product/commodity. The objective is to highlight differences as well as similarities. A quick review of what has been received showed that there are many more similarities than differences, which should make it feasible for all the organizations to work together on a harmonization process and lead to recommendations for harmonizing the definitions used by all the organizations. It is expected that the draft website design will be ready by January 2007.

III. Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics in 2007

5. After the launch of the website in January 2007, each organization will have a few months to comment on the overall site and on any particular item concerning their own information.

6. IEA will convene a second meeting of the Working Group in 2007, which will exploit the information gathered and identify concrete actions in each of the areas

already identified, such as harmonization, joint training material, joint training sessions and cooperation in data collection.

7. After the second meeting of the Oslo Group, which will take place in February 2007, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics can work out an action plan for its second meeting, at which the outcomes of the Oslo Group meeting can be elaborated, avoiding duplications but further facilitating cooperation between the two groups.

IV. General comments

8. The main objective of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics is to improve the overall quality of energy statistics in terms of coverage, details, timeliness, reliability and relevance. Achieving this goal will enhance better cooperation between organizations. Much progress has been made over the last two years in terms of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. For instance, the first Joint Oil Data Initiative training session (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, August 2006) and the joint Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)-IEA training workshop on energy statistics (Tokyo, October 2006) were organized; both of them can be cited as good examples of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Similarly, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and IEA are planning to organize training for Mediterranean countries in January 2007.

9. APEC has adopted questionnaires similar to those of Eurostat, IEA and the Economic Commission for Europe, and compatible with that of the United Nations Statistics Division. This is a first step towards a global harmonization of definitions, if not of questionnaires. The other positive step towards harmonization between organizations and some countries is the translation of the IEA/Eurostat *Energy Statistics Manual* into German, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

10. The first meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics has created a momentum that some of the participating organizations have used to move their cooperation forward. However, more needs to be done to achieve the goals. The joint website could serve as a catalyst to further boost harmonization and cooperation. This is what the International Energy Agency, together with all organizations participating in the Working Group, will be working on in 2007.

11. The Statistical Commission may wish to take note of the present report.

Annex I

Communiqué of the first meeting of the Working Group on Energy Statistics

1. Twenty-four major regional and international organizations, either collecting or using energy statistics, convened in Paris at an International Energy Statistics meeting hosted by IEA on 22 and 23 November 2005. The objective of the meeting was twofold: to share experience and to explore avenues of further cooperation.

2. The organizations shared positive experiences and challenges encountered in the development and maintenance of strong and reliable energy statistics. Although there was a broad consensus to acknowledge improvements in the quality of energy statistics over the past five years, participants identified a number of concerns that must be addressed if those gains are not to be jeopardized.

3. Concerns and problems include low awareness and commitment at the political level, insufficient resources and expertise, and the need for more harmonization and cooperation. Moreover, new challenges await the energy statistics community, such as market liberalization and globalization, the monitoring of energy efficiency, the impact of bio-energy production, trade and use, the penetration of renewables and the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions. The requirement for more detailed energy statistics is coupled with a push for increased timeliness and reliability of energy statistics.

4. The organizations discussed potential areas for future cooperation and harmonization in order to improve the quality of energy data. Actions need to be taken to sustain and improve the quality of energy statistics in the future. Building on successful cooperation and harmonization initiatives, such as the recent launch of the Joint Oil Data Initiative world database, participants agreed to:

- Seek stronger political will and commitment to increase the quality of energy reporting
- Strengthen the exchange of information and expertise
- Emphasize capacity-building and training
- Further harmonize methodologies, terminologies and definitions
- Meet at regular intervals on a rotational basis to review progress

5. In response to a call from the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session, in 2005, two new working groups — the Oslo Group and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics — will explore ways and means of further improving energy statistics at the country and international levels.

6. Regional and international organizations are committed to undertaking these actions to meet the challenges faced by energy statistics. However, all parties, from energy industries to country administrations, must also match the commitment of the organizations with similar dedication and with the proper resources.

Participating organizations and bodies

African Energy Commission

Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation

African Petroleum Producers Association

Economic Commission for Europe

EURELECTRIC

Eurogas

European Commission/Statistical Office of the European Communities

European Environment Agency

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Atomic Energy Agency

International Energy Agency

International Energy Forum Secretariat

International Monetary Fund

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Organization of Arab Petroleum-Exporting Countries

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Latin American Energy Organization

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Statistics Division

World Bank

World Energy Council

World Coal Institute

Annex II

List of information requested from each organization

- A short description (3 to 4 paragraphs) of the organization, highlighting energy statistics; the main flows and products covered by the organization; the contact details of the statistics unit (address, phone, fax, e-mail and website). Access the page on the International Energy Agency website to have a better idea of what information is requested from all of the organizations.
- An electronic list of the definitions (flows and products) used by the organization (usually part of the questionnaires).
- A list of the documents (manuals, guides, questionnaires) published by the organization to ease the collecting, processing and understanding of its statistics, including the corresponding web link.
- A list of units for energy statistics used by the organization or that the organization thinks should be shown on the site.
- The links to the databases which can be accessed on the organization's website. If databases are arranged by type of energy, each link should be specified.

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Report of the International Monetary Fund on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In compliance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the International Monetary Fund on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics, which is submitted to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

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Report of the International Monetary Fund on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics

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I. Introduction

1. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics,[1] established in 1992 under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission, reconvened in 1998 to coordinate work to improve the data on external debt and international reserves, inclusive of methodological soundness, transparency, timeliness and availability of data. These data help in assessing the potential vulnerability of a country's financial position with other countries. A report on the Task Force work programme was provided to the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2003. The present report provides an update of the work since the last report and outlines the forward work programme. While challenging, the forward work programme will continue to benefit from the cooperative, coordinated and sustained efforts of the Task Force agencies, which are key to the success of the Task Force.

2. Since the March 2003 report to the Statistical Commission, the Task Force achieved major breakthroughs, including more readily available data from national/debtor and creditor/market sources, quarterly national external debt data, a more detailed instrument breakdown by creditor source, the development of a data quality assessment framework[2] for external debt statistics, as well as joint training to build countries' capacities in producing the external debt data.

II. Availability of external debt data

A. Joint External Debt Hub

3. With the endorsement of the Task Force, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank launched the Joint External Debt Hub[3] in March 2006. The Hub is a major step in the dissemination of external debt statistics to the international community. It brings together national/debtor and creditor/market external debt data, and selected foreign assets. The creditor/market data are presented in a table that subsumes the former Joint BIS-IMF-OECD-World Bank statistics on external debt (JDS), a website launched in 1999. In March 2006, the four agencies jointly signed a service level agreement to formalize their ongoing collaboration and, importantly, to define their areas of responsibilities with regard to the Hub work going forward. The World Bank agreed to continue maintaining the Hub website while OECD agreed to host the Hub registry.

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[1] The Task Force is chaired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and meets annually. It comprises representatives of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Central Bank, IMF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Paris Club Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Bank. The Joint External Debt Hub work is carried out mainly by the four agencies represented in the "subgroup": BIS, IMF, OECD and the World Bank.

[2] The data quality assessment framework is used for comprehensive assessments of countries' data quality.

[3] The Joint External Debt Hub, available at www.jedh.org, pilot tested the statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX) protocol.

B. National/debtor data sources

4. The national/debtor data are sourced from the World Bank's quarterly external debt statistics[4] database, launched in November 2004. The database includes a core set of quarterly external debt data provided by the IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) subscribing countries, which are based on concepts and presentation tables articulated in the *External Debt Guide*. Participation in the database is voluntary. Currently, 56 countries (including a non-SDDS subscriber) are providing their external debt data to it.

C. Creditor data sources

5. The creditor/market table in the Joint External Debt Hub (see annex I) now features 26 lines — almost double the series covered in the former JDS table, which will be decommissioned by end-2006. Moreover, unlike the JDS website, industrial countries are covered. The creditor data series comprise (a) loans and other credits, (b) debt securities, (c) supplementary information (officially supported trade-related credits and debt securities held by non-residents) and (d) memorandum items covering international reserves (excluding gold), portfolio investment assets and total cross-border deposits with foreign banks. The Hub also includes a summary table that compares national and creditor/market data in debt securities and loans for countries for which both data sources are available.

6. The BIS data (locational and consolidated banking statistics, and international debt securities statistics) remain a central feature of the table. OECD has recently secured the necessary funding for the resumption of the compilation of bilateral loans data, closing a significant gap in the Hub arising from resource constraints. Regarding export credits data, BIS has commenced work with the Berne Union[5] with a view to using its recently modernized quarterly reporting system for insured export credits. Furthermore, a new initiative has been launched by OECD, the World Bank and some key export credit agencies to assess the possibility of obtaining export credits data.

D. Public sector debt data

7. In 2004, the Task Force on Finance Statistics endorsed an IMF initiative to develop a data template for the reporting of public sector debt statistics for surveillance purposes. The initiative aimed at (a) developing a uniform presentation of public sector statistics based on recognized methodologies, such as the *External Debt Guide* and the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001*, and (b) promoting the availability of public debt statistics through international cooperation in debt reporting, technical assistance and IMF surveillance work.

8. So far, 27 countries have been approached to participate in the pilot study to test the public sector debt statistics template and 4 countries have reported data.

[4] The quarterly external debt statistics database is available at: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/EXTDECQEDS/0,,menuPK:1805431~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:1805415,00.html.

[5] The Berne Union (International Union of Credit and Investment Insurers, a group of 52 agencies).

Going forward, the intention is to have a critical mass of countries reporting public sector debt statistics within two years.

9. IMF shared with the Task Force the new guidance note on the statistical framework for capturing Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative assistance. The guidance note was developed drawing on existing methodology in the *Balance of Payments Manual*, the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001* and the *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual* to ensure that the advice given was consistent across different statistical domains.

III. Quality of external debt data

10. In addition to improving the availability of external debt data produced by national authorities, the Task Force is addressing the debt data quality issues on two fronts — promoting good practices of data quality based on the IMF data quality assessment framework and confirming the quality of data supplied by national authorities through consistency checks.

A. External debt statistics data quality assessment framework

11. In consultation with other Task Force agencies, IMF produced in June 2005 the external debt data quality assessment framework, which contains good statistical practices that encompass governance of statistical institutions, core statistical processes and statistical outputs. The Task Force considered that the external debt data quality assessment framework has many uses, including identifying and promoting "good practices" in compilation and dissemination of external debt statistics; designing and monitoring technical assistance programmes; assessing the quality of external debt statistics produced by national authorities; and, importantly, functioning as a self-assessment tool for country authorities in seeking donor support for capacity-building.

B. International investment position/external debt comparison

12. The Task Force supported the new IMF initiative to assess the consistency of external debt data reported by SDDS countries to the quarterly external debt statistics database and corresponding data series in the international investment position in the *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook*. This initiative is geared towards improving countries' external debt and international investment position data for effective use in economic surveillance work. From this exercise, comparator tables were produced and sent for comment to SDDS countries that had both international investment position data and data in the quarterly external debt statistics database for end-2004. Main differences were reviewed, particularly in sector, maturity and instrument classification, and for some countries, specific actions for closing the gaps were identified.

IV. Capacity-building

13. The Task Force agencies have made a significant contribution in disseminating international best practices in the compilation of external debt statistics through joint capacity-building training activities.

14. As noted in the previous report to the Statistical Commission at its 2003 session, in May 2002 IMF began a new series of external debt training courses directed at mid-level compilers, in collaboration with representatives of other Task Force agencies. In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) organize regional training courses in collaboration with Task Force agencies. In total, during the period May 2002-September 2006, these courses have provided training to 572 mid-level compilers from 142 countries (see annex II).

V. Forward work programme

15. In developing the way forward at its meeting in Washington, D.C. on 13 and 14 March 2006, the Task Force took stock of the progress to date. The development of the *External Debt Guide*, the establishment of the Joint External Debt Hub and the creation of the quarterly external debt statistics database have provided an extremely valuable framework that, by bringing together countries' bilateral external debt positions, highlights how savings gets channelled across countries. The framework also supplements the balance sheet data work currently under way by providing a country breakdown of countries' external assets and liabilities.

16. Acknowledging the importance of its work for surveillance and vulnerability purposes and market analysis, the Task Force undertook to focus its work on data implementation, notably filling gaps in the data sets and validating existing data with counterpart statistics, while maintaining its leading role in external debt methodology. The next meeting of the Task Force will be held in Geneva on 29 and 30 March 2007.

17. Notably, the Task Force sees the need to:

- **Improve the availability of external debt data**. This includes (a) expanding coverage of national/debtor data and (b) enhancing the creditor/market data in the Joint External Debt Hub. Moreover, the development of public sector debt statistics will continue and reports are to be received from the World Bank on its work on the South-South Survey on capital flows and from IMF on its proposal for a coordinated direct investment survey
- **Improve the quality of external debt data** through greater use of the external debt data quality assessment framework,[6] continued international investment position external debt comparison work and, possibly, a database of methodological guidance provided by the Task Force agencies to member countries on external debt statistics

[6] Such use could be factored as part of the World Bank proposal to develop a diagnostic tool with the objective of assessing debt management capacity in low-income countries, in order to: (a) guide the design of reform programmes, provision of technical assistance and capacity-building; and (b) monitor debt management performance over time.

- **Pursue collaboration among Task Force agencies in the field of external debt.** Collaboration in capacity-building in the production and dissemination of debt statistics is to be reviewed and collaboration is to be enhanced on issues of mutual interest, not least in relation to specific countries

- **Maintain the Task Force's leading role in external debt methodology** by reviewing the methodological guidance on debt reorganization for the update of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* and monitoring changes emerging from that update.

Annex I

Joint BIS-IMF-OECD-World Bank statistics on external debt*

(Millions of United States dollars)

Country X *Selected external debt items — all maturities*	*Type of data*	*Source*[a]	*Stocks (end of period)*					
			2003	*2004*				*2005*
			December	*March*	*June*	*September*	*December*	*March*
Loans and other credits								
Cross-border loans from foreign located banks	Creditor	BIS						
o/w:[b] to non-banks	Creditor	BIS						
Official bilateral loans, total	Creditor	OECD						
o/w: Aid loans	Creditor	OECD						
Other	Creditor	OECD						
Multilateral loans, total	Creditor							
o/w: IMF	Creditor	IMF						
Other institutions reporting quarterly data	Creditor	World Bank						
Officially supported trade-related credits:								
Lending from non-banks	Creditor							
Debt securities								
International debt securities	Market	BIS						
o/w: issued by non-banks	Market	BIS						
Brady bonds	Debtor	World Bank						
Supplementary information								
Officially supported trade-related credits: total								
Debt securities held by non-residents	Creditor	IMF						
Debt due within a year								
Loans and other credits								

Country X *Selected external debt items — all maturities*	*Type of data*	*Source*[a]	*Stocks (end of period)*					
			2003	*2004*				*2005*
			December	*March*	*June*	*September*	*December*	*March*
Loans from foreign controlled and foreign located banks	Creditor	BIS						
Official bilateral loans, total	Creditor	OECD						
o/w: Aid loans	Creditor	OECD						
Other	Creditor	OECD						
Multilateral loans: IMF	Creditor	IMF						
Officially supported trade-related credits:	Creditor							
Lending from non-banks	Creditor							
Debt securities								
International debt securities	Market	BIS						
o/w: issued by non-banks	Market	BIS						
Memorandum items — selected foreign assets								
International reserves (excluding gold)	Creditor	IMF						
Portfolio investment assets	Creditor	IMF						
Total cross-border deposits with foreign banks	Debtor	BIS						
o/w: by non-banks	Debtor	BIS						

* *Abbreviations*: BIS=Bank for International Settlements; IMF=International Monetary Fund; OECD=Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

[a] To be linked to metadata.

[b] o/w=of which.

Annex II

External debt statistics courses conducted by Task Force on Finance Statistics agencies (May 2002-September 2006)*

	Seminar and venue	*Lead agency*	*Collaborating agencies*	*Countries*	*Number trained*
1.	Joint Vienna Institute (Vienna), 6-17 May 2002	IMF	BIS, ECB, Paris Club Secretariat and UNCTAD	21	30
2.	ECCB Regional Debt Workshop (Basseterre), July 2002	COMSEC	IMF, World Bank	16	67
3.	Interregional Debt Workshop (London), March 2003	COMSEC	IMF, World Bank	15	23
4.	Brazil Training Centre (Brasilia), 12-23 May 2003	IMF	BIS, Paris Club Secretariat and UNCTAD	16	34
5.	Singapore Training Centre (Singapore), 22 September-3 October 2003	IMF	BIS and COMSEC	16	31
6.	Joint Africa Institute (Yaoundé), 17-28 November 2003	IMF	BIS and Paris Club Secretariat	19	26
7.	Joint Vienna Institute (Vienna), 12-23 July 2004	IMF	BIS, ECB, Paris Club Secretariat and UNCTAD	21	30
8.	IMF Headquarters (Washington, D.C.), 11-29 July 2005	IMF	World Bank, UNCTAD and Paris Club Secretariat	39	39
9.	China Training Centre (Beijing), 8-19 August 2005	IMF	BIS	1	55
10.	Joint Vienna Institute (Vienna), 5-16 September 2005	IMF	BIS, ECB, COMSEC and UNCTAD	28	30
11.	Joint Africa Institute (Tunis), 7-18 November 2005	IMF	BIS, COMSEC, Paris Club Secretariat and UNCTAD	17	25
12.	Eastern and Southern Africa (Kampala), 21-25 November 2005	MEFMI COMSEC	IMF and UNCTAD	9	29
13.	Arab Monetary Fund (Abu Dhabi), 15-26 January 2006	IMF	BIS and UNCTAD	16	32
14.	Brazil Training Centre (Brasilia), 20-31 March 2006	IMF	BIS, Paris Club Secretariat and UNCTAD	18	18
15.	Argentina Regional Workshop (Buenos Aires), 27-28 April 2006	UNCTAD	IMF	6	22
16.	Eastern and Southern Africa (Kampala), 10-11 July 2006	UNCTAD MEFMI	IMF	3	19
17.	West Africa Regional Course (Freetown), 8-10 August 2006	WAIFEM COMSEC	IMF	5	32

	Seminar and venue	*Lead agency*	*Collaborating agencies*	*Countries*	*Number trained*
18.	CARTAC Course (Barbados) 18-29 September 2006	IMF	COMSEC	18	30
	Total[a]				**572**

* *Abbreviations*: BIS =Bank for International Settlements; COMSEC =Commonwealth Secretariat; ECB =European Central Bank; IMF =International Monetary Fund; MEFMI =Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa; UNCTAD =United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; WAIFEM =West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management.

[a] 572 external debt compilers from 142 countries participated in external debt statistics courses conducted by Task Force agencies during the period May 2002-September 2006.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

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** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24), chap. I, sect. B, para. 2.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

1. The mission of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics is to develop and document best practice guidelines on concepts and methods of price statistics consistent with the established international standards on the subject.

2. The original terms of reference of the Working Group were presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session (E/CN.3/1999/7/Add.1, annex, sect. I). They were revised in June 2005 at the sixth meeting of the Working Group and are attached, as revised, to the present report as an annex. The original terms of reference emphasized the development of standards and manuals on consumer price indices, producer price indices and export-import price indices. Consumer price index and producer price index manuals were published in 2004, and the revised terms of reference refer to the development and implementation of the consumer price index and producer price index manuals and the development of standards and manuals on further price statistics with particular regard to export-import price indices and real-estate price indices.

3. French, Spanish and Russian versions of the consumer price index manual will be available in 2007. Work is commencing on a Chinese version of the consumer price index manual and on versions of the producer price index manual in languages other than English.

4. The seventh meeting of the Working Group, in May 2007, agreed that the electronic versions of the consumer price index and producer price index manuals would be updated and that the manuals would be supplemented by a series of handbooks. Each handbook will require the approval of the Working Group.

5. . A first draft of the export-import price index manual was completed and posted on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) website in early 2006. As part of its review process, IMF requested comments from national statistical offices and interested international organizations on the draft and organized a seminar on the manual, which was held in September 2006. Publication is expected late in 2007.

6. A joint Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-IMF workshop on real-estate price indices was held in November 2006 as a precursor to a possible real-estate price index manual.

7. The seventh meeting of the Working Group agreed that as from the thirty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, the Economic Commission for Europe is to succeed IMF as the secretariat of the Working Group.

8. The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in 2007 at a date and location yet to be determined.

Annex

The terms of reference and functioning of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

Mission

1. The mission of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics is to develop and document best practice guidelines on concepts and methods of price statistics and indicators consistent with the established international standards on the subject and to encourage their use. Price statistics and indicators include consumer price indices, producer price indices, export-import price indices, real-estate price indices and such other price statistics and indicators as are required, preferably compatible with the System of National Accounts, 1993 and the updates thereto.

Objectives

2. The objectives of the Working Group are:

(a) To develop and implement the *Consumer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice* (International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2004) and the *Producer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice* (International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington, D.C., 2004). The work includes periodic updates of the electronic versions of the manuals available on the ILO and IMF websites;

(b) To arrange for the establishment of standards and manuals for other price statistics, in particular, export-import price indices and real-estate price indices;

(c) To coordinate the work of international organizations in implementing the best practices contained in the price index manuals, in sharing information on training and technical assistance and in using resources efficiently to avoid duplication of efforts;

(d) To assist in the development of a framework for price statistics to explain the links between various price indices and between price indices and other relevant economic and labour statistics.

Composition

3. The Working Group currently comprises the following organizations:

(a) Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);

(b) International Labour Organization;

(c) International Monetary Fund;

(d) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

(e) Statistical Office of the European Communities;

(f) World Bank.

4. The Working Group is open to all interested and committed organizations; chairs of advisory groups on price index manuals and experts from national

statistical offices, academia and international organizations. The Working Group will invite these interested parties to participate in its work programme.

5. The International Labour Organization initially provided the secretariat of the Working Group but was succeeded by IMF in April 2004.

External linkages

6. The activities of the Working Group are expected to receive wider exposure through discussion at relevant regional meetings and regular communication with international experts and groups using electronic media such as the Internet.

7. The work of the Working Group will relate to, draw from and capitalize on the work of such technical groups as the Ottawa Group on Price Statistics and the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, and will complement that of regional and international organizations.

Immediate output

8. The immediate output of the Working Group will consist of the development and update of consumer price index and producer price index manuals, which will take into account:

(a) The recent emergence of economies in transition and movements towards free-market economies in many developing countries;

(b) The collapse of financial markets in many newly emerging and independent countries;

(c) Rapid technological improvements affecting the cost and quality of goods and services and, consequently, their relative prices, and changes in consumer demand and producer supply.

9. The manuals will continue:

(a) To provide an introduction to the theory of indices;

(b) To address both conceptual and operational issues such as sampling, collection methodology, compilation, organization and computation and dissemination of data;

(c) To be intended for use by both developed and developing countries;

(d) To be suitable for training and advisory missions.

Main activities

10. The Working Group will be responsible for the coordination and overall management of the work to update the existing manuals and for the development and approval of new manuals. An advisory group will be established to advise the Working Group on updates to the consumer price index and producer price index manuals. Technical expert groups will be established to advise on the development of the export-import price index and real-estate price index manuals. The teams of experts, working in parallel, will exist solely for the update and production of the manuals. Consultants from the members of the advisory group, the technical expert groups, the Working Group, the Ottawa Group and the Voorburg Group, as well as other recognized experts in price measurement from countries not represented in the

Ottawa and Voorburg Groups, will be appointed to prepare specific sections of the manuals on the issues identified by the Working Group. The exact form of authorship will, however, be decided on a case-by-case basis.

11. The Working Group will facilitate the sharing of information among member organizations about training plans and materials, technical assistance to countries on price indices and other activities the organizations undertake to implement the price index manuals.

12. Meetings of the Working Group will as far as possible take place at the same time as related scheduled meetings such as the ECE expert meeting on consumer price indices, the Ottawa and Voorburg Group meetings and the ILO/ECE meeting on consumer prices. In addition, the Working Group will conduct virtual meetings, using e-mail correspondence or teleconferencing as needed between face-to-face meetings to discuss issues and activities.

13. Proposals, outlines and draft material will be widely circulated through electronic and other media for comments and suggestions to ensure that all regional concerns are adequately addressed. Relevant organizations such as the regional commissions, the Ottawa Group and the Voorburg Group will also be encouraged to discuss them at their regular meetings.

Finances

14. Organizations participating in the Working Group are expected to meet their own direct expenses. In addition, organizations are expected to contribute to financing other related costs of the Working Group, including the development of the manuals and the hiring of experts.